

Sermon 5 26 & 27 18

We have two important days to celebrate this weekend. Today, we along with a number of Christian faiths, celebrate Trinity Sunday, a Sunday when we celebrate the doctrine of the Trinity. If I recall correctly, I have cheerfully admitted in the past that no one understands the Trinity, including myself. It is one of those things that we refer to as a "mystery." Much like last Sunday's subject, the Holy Spirit.

Well, two Sundays with two mysteries in a row seems a bit taxing to me. But rest assured, it's not that we won't *ever* understand these things, these theological concepts, just *not yet!* I'm trusting that a *lot* will be revealed to us during the course of eternity. (It's a good thing we'll have a lot of time.) Eventually, we'll be able to comprehend *everything*.

The Trinity is one of those times when we are reminded that God is God, and we're not. I put a quote in our tri-fold for today from John Wesley who, with his brother Charles, founded the Methodist Church: "Bring me a worm that can comprehend a man, and then I will show you a man that can comprehend the Triune God." Worms are worms. People are people. And, I repeat, God is God and we're not.

But something else that we are observing this weekend is Memorial Day. It's lucky for me that for both Trinity Sunday and memorials, the color for vestments is the same – white.

Strictly speaking, Memorial Day is not a religious holiday. But – it is a day when we often find ourselves thinking about death and honoring the dead, most particularly those who have died in service of our country. And for us as Christians, it is also an opportunity to remember that death is not final. It is not the end.

There was a time when people called Memorial Day Decoration Day. It was a time to clean up and decorate the graves of those killed in military action. Also, it was a time set aside to clean up cemeteries. Sometimes people would take picnics to gravesites and make a day of it. Some people still do.

Some of us think of this as a day to honor *all* of those who have passed before us. My brother sent me a text message with pictures showing how he had cleaned up our parents' graves. I thanked him. Our father was in the Army, but he cleaned them all up.

A couple of weekends ago, a little three year old girl was baptized here at a Saturday service. I finally got to try out a solution I came up with *after* the last time I baptized a three

year old... who spent her baptism in hysterics.

This little girl got very upset too. So I made a deal with her. I said that if I let her baptize me, she had to let me baptize her. She had her doubts. But she baptized me – three full scoops of the seashell – I was a little drippy and then I successfully baptized her and everybody cheered and everything was OK.

This little girl's Daddy and many of her parent's friends are in the armed services. We had an array of dress uniforms sitting in the front for this baptism. After the service, her Daddy told me that he was shipping out on Monday for Syria. This sort of information always brings me up short. I asked him if he wanted a blessing. I always offer blessings for those who may find themselves in harms way. He said "Yes please," so we prayed right here in this aisle. I prayed for his safe return and the safe return, whole in both body and mind, of all his friends and fellow soldiers. These are important prayers. You can imagine the gravity with which they are received. And it is a privilege for me to pray with these men and women when I have the opportunity.

I usually find myself praying extemporaneously on these occasions, but we have a prayer in our Book of Common Prayer for those in the Armed Forces of our Country. I'd like to take a moment with all of you to pray for them first.

The Lord be with you. *And also with you.* Let us pray,

"Almighty God, we commend to your gracious care and keeping all the men and women of our armed forces at home and abroad. Defend them day by day with your heavenly grace; strengthen them in their trials and temptations; give them courage to face the perils which beset them; and grant them a sense of your abiding presence wherever they may be; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*"

Another prayer which is more exact for this holiday when we especially remember those who have died in the service of their country is this one. Let us pray.

"Almighty God, our heavenly Father, in whose hands are the living and the dead: we give thanks for all your servants who have laid down their lives in the service of our country. Grant to them your mercy and the light of your presence; and give us such a lively sense of your righteous will, that the work you have begun in them may be perfected; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*"

But with these prayers let us also remember this Memorial Day that we are people

of the resurrection. When we celebrate All Saints Day, we celebrate all those we love and see no longer, but that doesn't mean we won't ever see them again. We celebrate them as the resurrected they will be – as the resurrected we all will be.

The communion of the saints means just that. We live in the certain knowledge that we will see those we have loved and lost again. We can look upon the dying and say, "I will see you again." That is the certain gift of eternity.

I often share this with those who have lost or are losing loved ones. There is in each of us an energy – the energy of life. We have all seen it. We have only to look in a mirror to see it. It is given to us by God. And we all know from our basic science classes that energy cannot be destroyed. Energy cannot be destroyed. It can only be changed.

First Corinthians, from which Handel quoted for the *Messiah*, "And we shall be changed." All those we love and think we've lost are not gone. They cannot perish. Their wonderful life energy is eternal. They are changed.

That is God's gift to us and we can find comfort in that on this Memorial Day and every day. Let us pray.

Gracious God, Grant to all those we love but see no longer your mercy and the light of your presence; and give us such a lively sense of your will, that the works of love which you have begun in them may be perfected in us. Always remind us that we will see them again. All through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And dear God, I promise I'll get back to the mysteries of the Trinity next year!

Amen!